

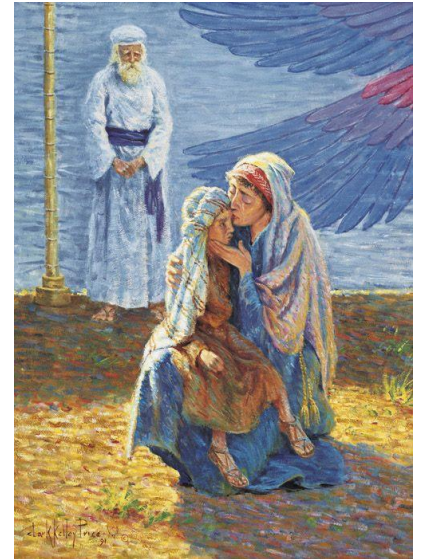


Create a peaceful space to pause, and allow yourself to feel God's presence alongside you, as near to you as your own breath. In following the reflection below, as a church we will draw closer to God and to one another as we grow in faith and deepen our sense of belonging to God.

1 Samuel 2: 18-21 'Eli blesses Samuel's Parents'

¹⁸ The boy Samuel continued to serve the Lord, wearing a sacred linen apron. ¹⁹ Each year his mother Hannah would make a little robe and take it to him when she accompanied her husband, Elkanah, to offer the yearly sacrifice. ²⁰ Then Eli would bless Samuel's parents and say to Elkanah, "May the Lord give you other children by this woman to take the place of the one you dedicated to him." After that they would go back home. ²¹ The Lord did bless Hannah, and she had three more sons and two daughters. The boy Samuel grew up in the service of the Lord.

Hannah had prayed to God for a son and promised that should he be born he would be dedicated to the Lord. When Samuel was born Hannah kept the baby at home to begin with but when he was around four years old his parents took him to the tabernacle at Shiloh to serve the Lord under the care of the priest Eli. Hannah only saw him once a year when she took him new clothes. How long must have been the days between visits, how quick the hours she had with her son as she saw him grow from a child to a boy. Time certainly travelled at different speeds for Hannah as it does for us.



Looking back it seems, and is, a very long time since we worshipped together in church, yet the individual weeks pass quickly. Friday is my "washday" and as I collect everything together, I think not already, it was only...! Do you think the same when you do your weekly chores?

And have you noticed that if you are early, time passes slowly but if you are late, it flies by! It seems that time has different speeds yet if we think scientifically each second is the same length of time. Time is very strange.

In his second letter Peter recalls the words of the Psalmist, "With the Lord a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like a day." (Psalm 90). We are made in God's image and so perhaps it is not surprising that for us too time is experienced at different rates! But however fast or slow time passes it is always God's time and we need to hand over our minutes, days, weeks to him to guide and lead us into his future. The old hymn 'I Need Thee Every Hour' reminds us that however short or long we think an hour is, we need God to see us through each one. So let us use the words of the hymn as our prayer:

Prayer: by Annie Sherwood Hawks (1835 -1918)

I need thee every hour, most gracious Lord;
no tender voice like thine can peace afford:
I need thee every hour; stay thou near by;
temptations lose their power when thou art nigh:
I need thee every hour, in joy or pain;
come quickly and abide, or life is vain:
I need thee every hour; teach me thy will,
and thy rich promises in me fulfil:

*I need thee, O I need thee,
every hour I need thee;
O bless me now, my Saviour;
I come to thee.*